



The Teacher Who Changed My Life

By Layne Restrick

Best Practice 1: Meet a recognized need in the community

Teacher Appreciation Week seems to usually only recognize elementary school teachers. High school teachers rarely receive any recognition or tokens of appreciation from their students and families during Teacher Appreciation Week. My students created a project during Teacher Appreciation Week to let the Edgewood High School (EHS) faculty know how much they meant to them.

Best Practice 2: Achieve curricular objectives through service-learning

While the students completed the service-learning project, they were able to use their writing skills to create meaningful cards and letters to the faculty of EHS. We also read a story entitled, "The Teacher Who Changed my Life" by Nicholas Gage, which explores how much of an impact a certain teacher had on the author's life. We talked about how we all are teachers in some way (or will be) and talked about why our teachers were so important.

Best Practice 3: Reflect throughout the service-learning experience

The students reflected in several ways. They worked in groups to decide what impact teachers had on their lives. At the end of the project, and once the students had hand delivered their cards, they wrote an informal essay about the project. Many were surprised at the reactions of the teachers. We received several anonymous notes from teachers in the building thanking the students for their efforts.

Best Practice 4: Develop student responsibility

Students were broken up into groups and each group was responsible for a department in the building. Each group assigned individual teachers to each member, who then made individual cards.

Best Practice 5: Establish community partnerships

This experience helped the faculty see that the students really do appreciate the work they do, even if they don't express it too often. It also allowed the students to see how much of their lives are dependent on teachers and how important it is to say thank you.

Best Practice 6: Plan ahead for service-learning

(See *Best Practice 4.*) We received nothing but positive feedback and many students expressed an interest to do more. They also wanted to make cards for their middle school and elementary school teachers. The project has many avenues on which to continue and expand.

Best Practice 7: Equip students with knowledge and skills needed for service (See *Best Practice 2.*) Students were able to see the value in teaching and began to think of others instead of themselves.